

HAWTHORNE'S USE OF THE DOUBLE IN  
"PASSAGES FROM A RELINQUISHED WORK"

by

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Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote "Passages from a Relinquished Work" sometime before the early part of 1834, during what have been called his "solitary years," 1825-1837. Very little critical attention has been paid to this tale, perhaps because it has not been seen as a unified work of art. As the title suggests, it does consist of pieces from a projected but unrealized book that was to be called The Story Teller. These pieces, though, came to comprise an artistic whole--a tale in which, I contend, Hawthorne uses the Double motif to explore the divided nature of the artist. In this tale, the storyteller wrestles with the fact that he is more than just a teller of tales; to the extent that he examines the depth of human existence, he is also a kind of religious thinker.

Before elaborating on my thesis, I will present the context out of which this tale emerged, the history of the larger work of which these "passages" were a part. In 1832 Hawthorne was envisioning a collection of tales and sketches based on travels he had made and intended to make through New England, New York State, and Canada. It was a book by which, Hawthorne jokingly wrote to a friend, he intended "to acquire an (undoubtedly) immense literary reputation. . ." (Adkins 132). The work would feature an itinerant storyteller, whose travels and fortunes would link the many tales he would tell. As the narrator in "Passages" says,

With each specimen will be given a sketch of the circumstances in which the story was told. Thus my air-drawn pictures will be set in frames, perhaps more valuable than the pictures themselves. . . . (408-9)

Apparently Hawthorne had completed these tales and connecting sketches by early 1834, for it was then that he sent them to Samuel Goodrich, who

had earlier published several of Hawthorne's tales in his annual The Token. As I will explain later, no one is sure how many or precisely which tales may have comprised the work Hawthorne called The Story Teller, but the manuscript must have been a large one. Hawthorne's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Peabody, describes the project: "When the book was done, Hawthorne sent it to Goodrich to publish, but Goodrich declined to undertake it--it was two volumes. . ." (Conway 32).

Instead, Goodrich passed the manuscript on to Joseph T. Buckingham, then editor of the New England Magazine, who began to serialize The Story Teller. In the November, 1834 issue appeared The Story Teller, No. 1, a first-person account of the beginning of the storyteller's travels; the installment consisted of three sections: "At Home," "A Flight in the Fog," and "A Fellow Traveller." In the next issue, December, 1834, the second installment appeared: The Story Teller, No. 2, consisting of two parts: "The Village Theatre," a continuation of the first-person frame, and "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," an inner story recited by the narrator.

The planned serialization, however, ended after this second installment because of a change in the editorial staff of the magazine. According to Nelson Adkins, in "The Early Projected Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne,"

The new editors, especially Park Benjamin, declined to print any more of the work as a literary unit, with the result that the framework of the book was virtually abandoned, and the collection was broken down into such parts as could be printed in the magazine either as stories or essays. (133)

Thus Hawthorne's intended format for The Story Teller--in which the frame would inform the stories--was lost. Nelson Adkins has worked to reconstruct the original project, though he points to the difficulty of doing so:

The rest of The Story Teller, reduced by the magazine editors to individual tales and sketches, offers a baffling and, I fear, insoluble problem to one who would rebuild Hawthorne's project as a dramatic unit. (138)

While acknowledging that much of the original material was scrapped by the editors, Adkins has nevertheless attempted to discover which of Hawthorne's pieces (most of which were published in later collections) would have been a part of the original Story Teller project. He includes those pieces which were published in the New England Magazine and American Monthly Magazine from 1834 to 1838, and in which the content is consistent with the intended project.

Adkins believes that it was meant to include the following eight tales: "The Gray Champion," "Young Goodman Brown," "Wakefield," "The Ambitious Guest," "The Old Maid in the Winding Sheet," (later published as "The White Old Maid"), "The Vision of the Fountain," "The Devil in Manuscript," "A Visit to the Clerk of the Weather,"<sup>1</sup> and possibly "The Three-Fold Destiny."<sup>2</sup> Also included, Adkins believes, were three essays--"Old News," "A Rill from the Town Pump," and "Graves and Goblins"--as well as a number of travel sketches--"My Visit to Niagara," "Old Ticonderoga," "Sketches from Memory," and "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man." Finally, Adkins believes that the second section of "Fragments," entitled "My Return Home," would have been the conclusion of The Story Teller.<sup>3</sup>

Adkins also believes that "The Seven Vagabonds," published in 1833, was Hawthorne's "earlier attempt to write an introduction to his proposed volume" (134), reflecting his plan to have his storyteller travel with the merry group of vagabonds in that tale. Though he evidently changed his mind, Hawthorne does have his narrator refer to the earlier tale in "Passages":

The idea of becoming a wandering story-teller had been suggested a year or two before, by an encounter with several merry vagabonds in a showman's wagon, where they and I had sheltered ourselves during a summer shower. . . . (407-8)

Whatever the precise details of his project may have been, Hawthorne was deeply disappointed by his failure to have it published as planned. Elizabeth Peabody describes his dismay with the editors who rejected his plan:

So they tore up the book and Hawthorne said he cared little for the stories afterward, which had in their original place in the "storyteller" [sic] a greater degree of significance. (Conway 32)

How much we should regret the failure of Hawthorne's projected work is something on which his critics have differed. Biographer Randall Stewart has called Hawthorne's project "an admirable plan, for it would have united in one work Hawthorne's imaginative and reportorial faculties as none of his published writings quite do." Stewart blames the loss of the work on the "ineptitude of the publishers and editors," saying that "Benjamin and Goodrich do not appear either generous or wise in the history of Hawthorne's literary career" (38).

More recent critics, however, have been less laudatory. Adkins, admitting that his conclusions are based on fragmentary evidence, speculates that Hawthorne never fully integrated his various pieces, that he was not able to adjust each of his stories dramatically to his framework, and that, perhaps, the publishers were correct in deciding to print only some of the more interesting pieces from the original. Nina Baym, in The Shape of Hawthorne's Career, shares Adkins's suspicion that the planned collection would not have been an artistic success:

It is quite possible that Hawthorne invented the frame after having written a substantial quantity of unrelated matter, and that he never achieved coherence in the first place. (41)

She offers as further proof the fact that later, in the 1850's, when his work was being reissued following the success of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne could have published The Story Teller in its intended form but chose not to.

Hawthorne did choose to reissue the introductory material of The Story Teller in 1854, but in a different manner. When his publishers were looking for additional material for the second edition of Mosses from an Old Manse, Hawthorne wrote from Liverpool, where he was serving as consul, telling his publishers to collect from those issues of the New England Magazine which contained his stories

about ten or more pages of introductory matter, which, I think, will do very well to publish as an article in the "Mosses." It should be separated from all extraneous stuff . . . and may be called "passages from a relinquished work"--or something of that kind. I believe the title was "The Itinerant Storyteller."  
(Adkins 135n)

Hawthorne's memory of the twenty-year-old material proved sufficient; as he had directed, the 1854 edition of Mosses from an Old Manse included a work entitled "Passages from a Relinquished Work," made up of the first two installments of The Story Teller: "At Home," "A Flight in the Fog," and "A Fellow Traveller" from the first; "The Village Theatre" from the second. The only change was the exclusion of the inner tale of "The Village Theatre"--"Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe"--presumably because that tale had been published separately in 1837 in Twice-Told Tales.<sup>4</sup>

With this somewhat haphazard publication history, perhaps it is understandable that few Hawthorne critics have given much attention to "Passages from a Relinquished Work." And those who have--Millicent Bell, Jean Normand, and Nina Baym<sup>5</sup>--have focused not on the tale itself as an artistic whole, but rather on its role in the Story Teller collection, especially those pieces that present the traveling author-character occasionally called Oberon.

In Hawthorne's View of the Artist, Millicent Bell discusses "Passages" as one of Hawthorne's many portrayals of the artist's dilemma: his tendency to be alienated from the world. "The struggle against this alienation was a lifelong one for Hawthorne; he strove heroically for a sense of role and purpose for his art" (97). Bell considers the narrator of "Passages" to be another version of Oberon--the author-character in two Story Teller stories: "The Devil in Manuscript" (in which Oberon burns his manuscripts) and in "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man" (in which he returns home and dies, a lonely disillusioned man).<sup>6</sup> What Bell does not do is give any close attention to "Passages" to see how the struggle of the artist is explored in this tale.

Like Bell, Jean Normand, in Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation, discusses "Passages" as just one of many Hawthorne works which deal with the role of the artist. Unlike Bell, though, he makes no attempt to separate the Oberon persona from that of Hawthorne the man. Whereas Bell warns against equating the two, Normand blurs the distinction between character and writer. In fact, he uses the name "Oberon" to refer to the poet in Hawthorne. He contrasts the Oberon side of Hawthorne's personality--the youthful artist removed from reality,

"his unhappy consciousness"--with the vagabond Hawthorne--the one who would leave home to roam the countryside to communicate with his fellow men, "his joyful consciousness" (45). Although I do not share Normand's biographical view, I will build upon the idea of the divided mind of the artist, any artist. Normand hints that this division can be seen in "Passages" but does not examine it in any detail (36).

In The Shape of Hawthorne's Career, Nina Baym gives more attention to "Passages" than either Bell or Normand does. She says the significant element of the Story Teller works is the psychological journey of Oberon, from his leaving home in defiance to pursue his career (in "Passages") to his return home, chastened, having seen the folly of his youthful venture (in "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man"). Oberon's journey reveals that the artist cannot separate himself from society:

So far as the artist is concerned, to produce a literature that is founded on an evasion of life's serious truths is to produce trivia and to make oneself a trivial person. (45)

Baym shows how Oberon, "who expresses some aspect of Hawthorne's own more complex literary awareness" (43), learns from his adventures that art must be serious and moral. I agree with Baym's reading in general and will refer to elements of her interpretations at several points in my own more detailed discussion of "Passages." (I will not, however, refer to the narrator in this tale as "Oberon," as she and Normand have both done; I prefer not to since he is never given a name in this particular work.)

Bell, Normand, and Baym, then, have all asserted that "Passages" is one of Hawthorne's many works which examine the role of the artist. But no one has examined the particular treatment of that theme in this tale--a treatment



which is especially interesting because it makes use of a technique rarely used by Hawthorne: the motif of the Double.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of the Double, as Otto Rank has shown, has evolved from ancient traditional and folk beliefs and has survived in "modern man, who, having created civilization and with it an over-civilized ego, disintegrates by splitting up the latter into opposing selves" (65).<sup>8</sup> The conventional Double, as Robert Rogers explains, is "some sort of antithetical self, usually a guardian angel or tempting devil" (2). Albert Guerard, admitting that "the word double is "embarrassingly vague, as used in literary criticism" (3), presents an explanation of doubling in literature which is useful in this discussion of Hawthorne's tale:

One of the recurrent preoccupations of double literature is with the need to keep a suppressed self alive, though society may insist on annihilation: to keep alive . . . a truly insubordinate perhaps illusory, original and fundamental self. . . . (2)

Claire Rosenfield points to the use of the Double as reflecting "the possibility that each of us has within us a second or shadow self"--a doppelgänger (German for "double walker"). She reflects that fiction writers since the time of Poe and Melville have used the Double concept by juxtaposing two characters who represent the divided self, that is, projections of two opposing selves within the same personality (311-17). Similarly, Robert Rogers, in his analysis of the specific forms of doubling in literature, defines "subject doubling [as that which] represents conflicting drives, orientations, or attitudes. . ." (5).

This kind of doubling, I am convinced, is the central motif in "Passages from a Relinquished Work." I believe that when the storyteller-narrator of

this tale meets, early in his travels, a young man named Eliakim, he can be said to meet his Double--his "alter ego," as Nina Baym has called him (although she does so in a different context, which I will explain later). The two men, so alike and yet so different, symbolize the divided self of the artist. Eliakim represents an artistic self in conflict with, yet complementary and essential to, the artistic self represented by the storyteller. I intend to show how Hawthorne is using this Double motif to represent two conflicting impulses within the artist: the urge merely to entertain, however frivolously, and the urge to deal with life's serious truths.

Of the two characters, the storyteller is the major one; the first half of the tale concerns his life before meeting Eliakim. In the first section, called "At Home," the narrator, now an older man, tells of his childhood in a small village. Being an orphan, he was reared by a stern village parson, who lavished both daily prayer and daily stripes on his charge as he did on his own three boys. None of the stern upbringing, though, seemed to have made of the narrator the proper sort of fellow that his stepbrothers became. They grew up to take life seriously and to enter proper professions:

they being all respectable men, and well settled in life, the eldest as the successor to his father's pulpit, the second as a physician, and the third as a partner in a wholesale shoe store. (405)

In contrast, the narrator describes himself as

a youth of gay and happy temperament, with an incorrigible levity of spirit, of no vicious propensities, sensible enough, but wayward and fanciful. (407)

He never felt quite at home with his family; he always felt himself different, apart. He does not entirely fault the parson; instead he attributes the conflict primarily to his being an orphan. It is his fate not to have natural parents whose instincts would help them understand their son.

His being an orphan may have symbolic importance as well. The narrator--with his artistic temperament--is a different sort of person from the parson. As Baym says, the parson symbolizes the strict New England heritage against which Hawthorne himself rebelled. As portrayed by the narrator, the parson is a prototypical Puritan minister. "He was called Parson Thumpcushion, from the very forcible gestures with which he illustrated his doctrines" (405). With his powerful "pounding and expounding," he appears to keep "either the Old Nick or some Unitarian infidel at bay." Later the narrator refers to the "stern old Pilgrim spirit of my guardian" (406-7).

It is worth noting the light-hearted irreverence of this description of Parson Thumpcushion. The narrator seems to be smiling as he describes the man "pounding" his pulpit and "expounding" his doctrines. He continues in this humorous tone:

Certainly if his powers as a preacher were to be estimated by the damage done to his pulpit furniture, none of his living brethren, and but a few dead ones, would have been worthy even to pronounce a benediction after him. (405-6)

We can see here the ambivalence of the narrator's feelings toward his guardian: he disapproves of the parson's brand of preaching, yet he displays a kind of amused tolerance and grudging respect for the parson, at least now that he is looking back, older and wiser:

With late justice, though early enough, even now,  
to be tinctured with generosity, I acknowledge  
him to have been a good and wise man, after his  
own fashion. (406)

This ambivalence may remind us of the conflicting feelings Hawthorne had for the Puritanism of his ancestors. He admits a certain kinship with them: he says in "The Custom House" introduction to The Scarlet Letter that "strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine" (10). Yet he frequently reveals in his writings a distaste for the institutionalized harshness of Puritanism. In this tradition, Hawthorne may have felt somewhat like an orphan, a different sort of person not really "at home" with his heritage, just as the narrator of "Passages" is not fully "at home."

This rift between the young narrator and his guardian widens when the narrator fails to enter a "respectable" profession:

This would have been a dangerous resolution, any  
where in the world; it was fatal, in New-England.  
There is a grossness in the conceptions of my  
countrymen; they will not be convinced that any  
good thing may consist with what they call  
idleness; they can anticipate nothing but evil  
of a young man who studies neither physic, nor  
law, nor gospel, nor opens a store, nor takes to  
farming, but manifests an incomprehensible  
disposition to be satisfied with what his father  
left him. (407)

The narrator further scandalizes his guardian by deciding to become a traveling storyteller. He tells us that Parson Thumpcushion "would rather have laid me in my father's tomb, than seen me either a novelist or an actor, two characters which I thus hit upon a method of uniting" (408).

So the narrator is seen by his guardian as the artist who chooses to avoid the "regular business of life," a view of the artist which Hawthorne

probably encountered quite often. Normand points out that Hawthorne had in his own environment no example of artistic vocation (22), and Baym says that Hawthorne was aware of the "general American indifference to the arts, based on their supposed uselessness," merging with the "residual Puritan hostility toward art as feigning" (18). Many years later, in "The Custom House," Hawthorne referred to this attitude. As he contemplated his forebears, he imagined them suffering in their graves, by seeing that

the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. . . . "What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of storybooks! What kind of a business in life,--what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation--may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler! (10)

As if reflecting Hawthorne's own experience, then, the young narrator of "Passages"--this "degenerate idler"--disregards the general disapproval of his community and leaves his village to become a wandering storyteller.

"A Flight in the Fog" begins with the narrator setting out on his journey, at such an early hour that a fog hovers unevenly and mysteriously around the area. In her discussion of "Passages," Baym sees this misty aura of the narrator's first steps as representing the uncertainty that Oberon [sic] feels and as prefiguring the ultimate failure of his storytelling adventure. She says, "The opening section foreshadows this misfortune [Oberon's return home as a failure in "Fragments"] and expresses Oberon's self-doubt" (44). She points to the rainbow that forms a kind of portal over the road which he will travel, quoting Hawthorne's description:

It had no brilliancy, no perceptible hues; but was a mere unpainted framework, as white and ghost-like

as the lunar rainbow, which is deemed ominous of evil. But, with a light heart, to which all omens were propitious, I advanced beneath the misty archway of futurity. (411)

Baym's interpretation is certainly supported by the negative words in this description ("ghost-like," "ominous of evil"), but I believe the scene could be viewed from a less grimly foreboding perspective. Perhaps the "misty archway" merely reflects the inevitable uncertainty, the insecurity, of any person launching a new career, especially one in general disfavor. The phrases "No perceptible hues," "unpainted," "white" could simply suggest the unknown, the blank page of the future, not yet colored in by events to come. Furthermore, the rainbow symbol usually has auspicious associations: in Genesis 9:12-19 the rainbow was presented after the great flood as a symbol of God's covenant with the earth, never again to destroy living creatures with a flood.

Another reason for modifying Baym's interpretation of this foggy beginning is the function the mist serves in the first few paragraphs of "A Flight in the Fog," which Baym does not discuss. Here the fog can be said to give an uncertain, ambiguous aspect, not just to the narrator's destination, but also to the village he is leaving behind. As he stands on a nearby rise, he sees how the fog seems to make invisible portions of the town itself. As he lists the buildings which comprise the various social structures of his community, he notices how unreal they appear:

the parson's dwelling . . . Squire Moody's  
mansion . . . my own paternal residence . . .  
the bank . . . the dry-good store . . . tobacco-  
manufactory . . . the meeting house. (409-10)

Except for Squire Moody's mansion, all these structures appear less solid, especially at their foundations, than they usually did to him. Perhaps

Hawthorne is suggesting that the social, business, and religious establishments which the narrator is leaving behind are themselves a "doubtful concern" (as he says of the dry-good store), that these institutions--representing the "regular business of life" which he is accused of rejecting--can themselves be called into question. Perhaps their values have no more validity, are no more real, than those of the "mission" on which he is embarking, that of a storyteller venturing into the world of the imagination.

One part of the scene, though, is noticeably prominent. While most of the buildings appear less substantial in the fog, the spire of the church stands in sharp relief.

The white spire of the meeting-house ascended out of the densest heap of vapor, as if that shadowy base were its only support; or, to give a truer interpretation, the steeple was the emblem of religion, enveloped in mystery below, yet pointing to a cloudless atmosphere, and catching the brightness of the east on its gilded vane. (410)

By using the term "emblem of religion," Hawthorne is calling attention to the significance of this scene. Perhaps at first glance the business of religion is quite insubstantial: the steeple rises out of the thickest of the fog, "as if that shadowy base were its only support." The tangible manifestations of religious truth here on earth--church buildings, organizations, congregations--are shaky and questionable, not solid or enduring. Yet, Hawthorne directs us to a "truer interpretation"; the steeple represents that reality which transcends its earthly forms. Perhaps the reality is "enveloped in mystery below," yet the spire points beyond the temporality and ignorance of human matters to a higher truth:

"a cloudless atmosphere, catching the brightness of the east on its gilded vane." The dim mistiness of the earthly church contrasts sharply with the clarity and brilliance of the transcendent truths which inspire it.

Possibly this symbolic description reflects Hawthorne's ambiguous attitude toward religion: his rejection of religious establishments, yet his belief that their doctrines contain, at their core, some basic truths about human life. As F. O. Matthiessen, in American Renaissance, says,

[Hawthorne's] brooding absorption in what was common in human experience revealed to him the kernel of reality beneath the decayed husks. . . . He saw the empirical truth behind the Calvinist symbols. (199)

In the midst of this symbolic scene stands the youthful narrator, rather romantically eager to venture forth. "I had never felt such a delicious excitement, nor known what freedom was till that moment" (410). Of course, the older "I" telling the story hints that the future will not be so bright. Nevertheless, likening himself to Don Quixote looking for signs, the youthful narrator steps through the rainbow-portal into the future, his main goal at this point being to change his name and get farther from home each day.

As the third section of "Passages"--"A Fellow Traveller"--opens, the traveling narrator is seeking relief from the noontime heat when he sees a pleasant wood, in which the young oaks "produced the most cheerful gloom imaginable" (412). He follows a clear, cool brook to its source: "a spring gushing out of an old barrel." The oxymorons in this setting are significant: the wood has a "cheerful gloom"; the newness of the spring water comes from an old barrel. These images seem to set the stage for the meeting of opposites about to occur.



In this seemingly prophetic setting, the narrator meets a man of about his own age, "a slender fellow dressed in black broadcloth, which was none of the finest, nor very fashionably cut" (412)--reading a book, apparently a pocket Bible. The narrator speculates on whether the young man is a minister or a student. Though we are never told specifically that the young man is one or the other, his name, Eliakim Abbott, certainly has religious associations. "Eliakim" was the name of at least three Old Testament figures and the name of two ancestors of Jesus mentioned in the New Testament, the name itself meaning "God will establish," or "Yahweh raises up" (Interpreter's Dictionary); "Abbott" reminds us of the quiet mission of a monastic.

The young man in black seems very different from the gregarious, gay narrator. When he first hears the narrator approach, "he started up, rather nervously." The narrator "would quite as willingly have found a merrier companion. . ." (412). Eliakim is extraordinarily shy, earnest, rather humorless. When the narrator jokes with him about the appearance of bread in the tree, he does not smile in return. Even when he asks the blessing on their food, Eliakim's "embarrassment made his voice tremble" (413).

After they share their bread-and-water meal, Eliakim becomes less reserved, and the two begin to talk. We can see, in spite of their difference in personality, that they are alike in several significant ways. Young and idealistic, they are both setting out for unknown destinations in which they will tell stories to whatever audiences they can muster, the storyteller to entertain his listeners, Eliakim to preach his gospel to any who will listen.

Neither knows where his road will lead. After their lunch the narrator requests Eliakim's presence for supper:

"Where? At your home?" asked he.  
 "Yes," said I smiling.  
 "Perhaps our roads are not the same," observed he.  
 "Oh, I can take any road but one, and yet not miss my way," answered I. . . . (414)

The narrator goes on to say that he has "a home every where or no where."

"No where, then; for this transitory world is not our home," said the young man, with solemnity.  
 "We are all pilgrims and wanderers; but it is strange that we two should meet." (414)

Eliakim says that, although he does not know his destination, God does, and Eliakim will find it "perhaps by an inner conviction . . . perhaps by an outward sign." This suggestion of looking for a sign echoes the description of the storyteller embarking on his journey in the fog, looking for a sign. In reply, the narrator again uses humor:

"Then believe me," said I, "the outward sign is already granted you, and the inward conviction ought to follow. We are told of pious men in old times, who committed themselves to the care of Providence, and saw the manifestation of its will in the slightest circumstances. . . . Sometimes even a stupid ass was their guide. May not I be as good a one?"  
 "I do not know," said the pilgrim, with perfect simplicity. (415-16)

Again, Eliakim, earnest and simple, seems so different from the jocular storyteller. As they start off together, the narrator jokes about their not being "apprehended by the keepers of any lunatic asylum, in pursuit of a stray patient." He suggests that Eliakim may equally doubt his sanity, though with less reason, "Since I was fully aware of my own extravagances,

while he acted as wildly, and deemed it heavenly wisdom" (415). So, while they are different--opposite, even, in some ways--they are nevertheless significantly alike.

We were a singular couple, strikingly contrasted, yet curiously assimilated, each of us remarkable enough by himself, and doubly so in the other's company. Without any formal compact, we kept together, day after day, till our union appeared permanent. (415)

The narrator says he will travel with Eliakim because Eliakim needs him:

for I never knew a person, not even a woman, so unfit to roam the world in solitude, as he was--so painfully shy, so easily discouraged by slight obstacles, and so often depressed by a weight within himself. (415)

But I believe there is a hint here that the narrator needs Eliakim as well; they are mutually dependent.

I am convinced that the narrator has met his double in Eliakim, that the good-humored, gregarious entertainer who enjoys creating fanciful tales has met his alter ego: a serious, shy, thoughtful man who deals seriously with the important matters in life and who wants to change people's lives in a more sober way. The artist has two selves: his storyteller self wants to create imaginative tales, to escape reality, while his Eliakim self knows that escapist art is trivial, that he cannot ignore the depths of human existence.

The next event in the tale is the disastrous first public appearance of the storyteller. We do not know what story he tells, but it is a failure. Hissed by an audience of nine persons "and not without good cause," he admits, he feels compelled to return their money. Significantly,

he finds that he is not mortified by his failure as might be expected. He is "more deeply grieved by an almost parallel misfortune" (416) which has happened that same evening to Eliakim--suggesting a strong identification with his Double, his other self.<sup>9</sup>

The narrator turns his own failure into a new, energetic resolve to take his craft more seriously--to cultivate all his powers, to fashion a more complete repertoire of moods:

every thing, indeed was requisite; wide observation, varied, knowledge, deep thoughts, and sparkling ones; pathos and levity, and a mixture of both, like sunshine in a rain-drop; lofty imagination, veiling itself in the garb of common life; and the practiced art which alone could render these gifts, and more than these, available. (416)

We do not know what kind of tale was such a failure for the narrator, but we may assume that it was too limited, perhaps too serious. At any rate, now he has expanded his art to include a mixture of "pathos and levity," "like sunshine in a rain-drop" (416).

In "The Village Theatre," the final section of "Passages," the storyteller and Eliakim arrive at a country town, where a company of actors are presenting dramatic scenes in a local hall. The storyteller is booked to be in the program on the next evening, and is given by the promoters some exaggerated publicity: "celebrated storyteller . . . recite his famous tale . . . has been received by rapturous applause!" (417-18). These "flaming bills" are in marked contrast to the few modest notices which announce that Eliakim will hold a religious meeting at the school-house that same evening.

Before his own performance that evening, the narrator is walking through the town, in good spirits, when he happens upon the school-house

where Eliakim is leading a service. Standing unnoticed to avoid embarrassing his friend, the narrator sees the dismally small and unresponsive group--about fifteen people, mostly female. He describes Eliakim's unimpressive manner: ". . . he was beginning to pray, in accents so low and interrupted, that he seemed to doubt the reception of his efforts, both with God and man" (418). At this point several of his listeners go out, "leaving him to begin his discourse under such discouraging circumstances, added to his natural and agonizing diffidence" (418).

From this pathetic scene, the storyteller returns to the tavern, where he mingles with the actors and is amused by them. When it is time for him to perform, he steps onto the stage "with a gay heart and a bold one" (419) and is greeted with a tumultuous applause far greater than he believes he merits; the crowd is wildly enthusiastic as he tells his tale: "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe."

Though his performance is a roaring success, the narrator is not pleased; instead he is struck by the shallowness of the crowd's reception. They respond more to frivolous buffoonery than to what, in his opinion, were "more legitimate strokes of humor." They laugh at the mere pronunciation of the name Mr. Higginbotham; they roar at the bobbing horse-hair queue someone has fastened to his collar without his knowledge. His audience is so rowdily appreciative that they break a row of benches--and still continue their applause. The narrator soberly reflects:

In after times, when I had grown a bitter moralizer,  
I took this scene for an example, how much of fame  
is humbug; how much of what our better nature blushes  
at; how much an accident; how much bestowed on  
mistaken principles; and how small and poor the  
remnant. (420)

His reflections on "how much of fame is humbug" are occasioned by juxtaposing the clamorous success of his rather silly, insignificant performance this evening with the failure of the sober, significant, yet unsuccessful "performance" of Eliakim in the meeting house. The storyteller feels the tension between two opposing impulses: On the one hand, the artist would be a storyteller--creative, entertaining, popular with the masses--yet he sees that fame thus achieved is hollow and unsatisfying. On the other hand, the artist would confront the deepest realities of life--would be an Eliakim, a sober purveyor of moral truth, a "religious" thinker. Yet he sees that the audience for such "preaching" is slim and unappreciative.

I must interrupt myself at this point to clarify my use of the word religious in connection with Eliakim and the "religious" side of the artist he personifies. First let me say what I do not mean by the term. I am not suggesting that Hawthorne as author ever saw himself in any conventionally religious role; that would be contradicted by both his comments and his behavior. On March 13, 1821, he wrote playfully to his mother,

I have not yet concluded what profession I shall have. The being a minister is of course out of the question. I should not think even you could desire me to choose so dull a way of life. (Stewart 11)

Hawthorne was by all accounts a non-churchgoer, and he consistently avoided any involvement with the established church.<sup>10</sup>

Nor am I suggesting that Eliakim represents simply the pull of Hawthorne's Puritan heritage, as Nina Baym does:

Although Eliakim is a ridiculous figure, he is also Oberon's alter ego; his appearance so early in Oberon's travels signifies that the New England heritage is not cast off simply by running away. (45)

Baym sees "Oberon" as too much a product of his Puritanical heritage to avoid his guilt and self-reproach, which are objectified in Eliakim.

I do not see Eliakim as representative of that Puritan tradition from which the narrator is escaping, primarily because the young man is the very antithesis of the clergymen typified in Parson Thumpcushion. In contrast to the dogmatic pulpit-pounders we associate with Puritanism, Eliakim is shy, reserved, quiet. He leads his service in a halting, near-whisper, suggestive of uncertainty, doubt. He has no church, virtually no congregation, and, it would seem, very little doctrine. Without the trappings of institutional religion, he simply appears to be soberly searching for the truths about life and the human heart.

This kind of religion, it seems to me, is in accord with what Hyatt Waggoner calls Hawthorne's "untheological, unchurched 'religion of the heart'" (Presence 13). Waggoner has commented on the difficulty of labeling Hawthorne's religious views. He apparently rejected not only the stern Calvinism of his ancestors, but also the more humanist Methodism of his day, as well as the optimistic liberal doctrines of the Unitarians and the Transcendentalists (Hawthorne 14). In "The Old Manse," Hawthorne writes that it is wearisome to leaf through the sermons and theological treatises he finds in the building's attic:

while I burrowed among those venerable books, in search of any living thought, which should burn like a coal of fire, or glow like an inextinguishable gem, beneath the dead trumpery that had long hidden it. But I found no such treasure; all was dead alike. (19)

Rejecting the stagnant religious thinking and forms of his time, Hawthorne wrote in an entry in The American Notebooks dated August 30, 1842 (about the date of the Old Manse essay):

I find that my respect for clerical people, as such, and my faith in the utility of their office, decreases daily. We certainly do need a new revelation--a new system--for there seems to be no life in the old one. (311-12)

Several critics have drawn connections between Hawthorne's struggle to find "a new revelation" and the revolution in Protestant theology beginning with Soren Kierkegaard, his contemporary. Henry G. Fairbanks says that Hawthorne "prefigures . . . Kierkegaard's intense subjectivity, conscious of guilt and alienation. . ." (989). Jean Normand, although he is probably right in asserting that Hawthorne had never heard of Kierkegaard, nevertheless draws parallels between the two men's spiritual views, both dealing with guilt, anguish, despair, separation (18-19). Waggoner also carefully explores the affinities between Hawthorne and Kierkegaard. Calling Hawthorne's "'theology' very much like that of the religious existentialists of his time and ours," Waggoner says, "With Kierkegaard, he moves from doubt and despair to faith . . . he explored the depths of existential anxiety, then countered Kierkegaard's 'Dread' with 'Hope'" (55-7).

It is this kind of religious impulse--one more in tune with the theology of Kierkegaard than with that of Jonathon Edwards or George Whitefield or William Ellery Channing or Ralph Waldo Emerson--that I believe is represented in the Double figure of Eliakim Abbott. The character of Eliakim--so uncertain, so shy, so earnest--seems consistent with the



existential mood of searching soberly, uncertainly, for meaning. He is dressed in plain, unfashionable clothing, out of the social mainstream. As I have noted, the reader never knows for sure that he is a minister; he may be just a scholar. The narrator's description of him as "so often depressed by a weight within himself" suggests the kind of anguished theological search in which theologians and other writers were beginning to engage during the nineteenth century, as they questioned the optimism of that century and struggled for new ways to articulate human truths. It is this kind of religious search that, I believe, Hawthorne considered an inescapable part of the role of the artist. He would search for that "kernel of reality beneath the decayed husks," or--to switch to a metaphor from "Passages"--to look beyond the dense fog covering the meeting-house to see that "emblem of religion," the steeple as it rises into the sunlight.

With this understanding of "religion," we can return to the theatre scene in "Passages," and see the narrator struggle with his artistic vocation. Even though he has learned that it is possible to use his storytelling craft to gain an approving audience and in fact must be frivolous and superficial to please that audience, he also realizes the hollowness, the "humbug" of that kind of fame. In contrast with his own shallow but popular performance, he is moved by the quiet persistence of his fellow-traveler Eliakim, who hesitantly but sincerely preaches his word to those few who will listen.

As the storyteller leaves the stage, refusing to respond to the curtain call, because he is full of disgust for what the audience is applauding, he is handed a letter from Parson Thumpcushion. Though he does not read the

letter, he does imagine the old man standing there, sternly disapproving the "fripperies of the theatre" and rebuking the storyteller. Ironically, at this point, he himself shares the Parson's disapproval of his "art."

Soon another image comes to the narrator's mind as he still holds the letter unopened:

Another train of thought came over me. The stern old man appeared again, but now with the gentleness of sorrow, softening his authority with love, as a father might. (421)

As he holds the unread letter in the flame of the candle, watching it burn, with this image of fatherly love and apology, he realizes that he might have succumbed to such a message.

It is fixed in my mind, and was so at the time, that he had addressed me in a style of paternal wisdom, and love and reconciliation, which I could not have resisted, had I but risked the trial. (421)

Apparently, if the narrator had actually read such a conciliatory letter from the Parson, he would have been tempted to turn his back on his profession and return to a more respectable one, one meriting the approval of the Parson.

Hawthorne's ambivalence about the role of the artist is at its height in the closing lines of the story, as the narrator says, "The thought still haunts me that then I made my irrevocable choice between good and evil fate" (421). What are we to make of his choice to continue as storyteller? Since he is still "haunted" by this choice, are we to assume that he sees it as evil? Certainly the Parson and his society would say so, but the narrator's view is much more complex. Although he decides to leave this

village, "indisposed . . . to the present exercise of his profession," he is, we may assume, moving on to another village, to perform for another audience. Furthermore, as he continues, he does so not alone but in company with Eliakim, his Double. As the two of them travel on together,

following the same road, on two such different errands, Eliakim groaned in spirit, and labored, with tears, to convince me of the guilt and madness of my life. (421)

This final line of "Passages" does not, I contend, mean that the narrator has chosen an evil fate. Rather, it reaffirms the uncomfortable yet essential duality which the artist must accept. We are left with the picture of this strange pair journeying together, symbolizing the conflicting yet complementary selves within the artist. His "Eliakim" self constantly reminds him that at the bottom of life, he will find not buffoonery and frivolity but "guilt and madness." But his "storyteller" self will, "on a different errand," transform that existential despair with the hope and joy that the imagination can offer.

If this reading is valid, then why, we might ask, does Eliakim drop out of the Story Teller collection after "Passages"? Nelson Adkins, in fact, considers Eliakim's disappearance a major flaw in Hawthorne's project. There are, in fact, two earlier writers who believed that Hawthorne originally meant the two characters to be of equal importance. In his introduction to the 1851 Riverside edition of Twice-Told Tales, George Lathrop writes,

The plan of "The Story Teller" was, to represent a young man of apostolical bent who set out to go from town to town, giving a sermon every morning, while a friend who accompanied him was to relate

in public, every afternoon, a story illustrating the text previously discoursed upon by the preacher; the whole affair being announced in each place by posters, much in the manner of a travelling show. It might be supposed that the introduction of sermons in a book of fiction would offer a stumbling-block to success; but Hawthorne evaded this obvious difficulty by merely mentioning the sermons and then giving the stories in full. (9-10)

An account which is basically similar, though it differs in some details, is given by Elizabeth Peabody. Quoted in Conway's 1895 biography of Hawthorne, she explains how the author wrote of a storyteller (not unlike himself)--"a dreamy person"--and a neighbor--"an enthusiast in religion"--who

agreed to set forth, the one to preach in the open air wherever he could collect a congregation by means of placards posted on trees and fences of the place where he should preach in the afternoon; and the other advertising that he should in the evening tell a story. (31-2)

Adkins does not share Lathrop's belief (he does not comment on Peabody's), and neither Lathrop nor Peabody offers any proof of the assertion each makes. In fact, there are some serious contradictions between Peabody's version and the actual events in "Passages": in the story it is after the narrator has begun his journey that he meets Eliakim, a stranger, in the woods.

Nevertheless, I would like to believe that Lathrop and Peabody are right in ascertaining Hawthorne's intention--that Hawthorne planned his Story Teller collection around not one character, but two. Even though his plan was not carried out, as we have seen, I believe that he knew at the outset--in "Passages from a Relinquished Work"--that the author needs

his Double, his Eliakim, that the storyteller is also a man of religion. As the storyteller and Eliakim travel together in this tale, they represent two seemingly contradictory yet equally necessary facets of the artistic perception. Through this Double motif, then, Hawthorne explores the divided mind of the artist--the central theme of "Passages from a Relinquished Work."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nina Baym does not include this tale in her Story Teller list. Adkins admits that Hawthorne's authorship of it has been disputed, but he believes it was written by Hawthorne and was a part of this proposed volume.

<sup>2</sup> In spite of the fact that this tale was published much later than the others (March, 1838), Adkins believes that it was part of the original plan. Baym does not include any work originally published after 1836.

<sup>3</sup> Adkins, in discussing the first section of "Fragments," says that

It is difficult to see what place this sketch could possibly have had in The Story Teller. Yet, at the close of this selection, Hawthorne, by means of a clumsy interlude, has attempted to identify the morbid "Oberon" with what is apparently the story teller.

So he believes that "My Return Home" is "without doubt" the conclusion of The Story Teller, even though "it is virtually impossible to reconcile the character of 'Oberon' with that of the storyteller" (140n).

<sup>4</sup> In the original New England Magazine piece, "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" was printed four paragraphs from the end of "The Village Theatre."

<sup>5</sup> Edwin Fussell refers briefly to the tale in Frontier: American Literature and the American West, 1965. Fussell discusses the storyteller-narrator of "The Seven Vagabonds" in relation to Hawthorne's involvement with the literary West:

"The Seven Vagabonds" probably belonged to an abortive series of tales tentatively called The Story Teller, in which various native fictions were to have been narrated in the framework of a Western town. Such a

project appears to be hinted at by the story itself and is further alluded to (as in "The Seven Vagabonds") in "Passages from a Relinquished Work" (1834), where Hawthorne fancifully discusses the projected framework in a decidedly nationalistic tone. (78n)

Neal Frank Doubleday, in Hawthorne's Early Tales; a Critical Study, merely mentions "Passages" in conjunction with the Story Teller work. He spends no time in critical study of the tale itself.

<sup>6</sup> The name Oberon is an apt one for Hawthorne's author-character, for it was the writer's nickname in college. His friends called him that because of his good looks and his imagination. One mythical Oberon had an "angelic face" and another had the gifts of insight into men's thoughts and of transporting himself instantaneously to any place (E. C. Brewer, The Reader's Handbook).

<sup>7</sup> He does make use of the Double in two other tales: "Alice Doane's Appeal" and "Monsieur de Miroir." (John Irwin in American Hieroglyphics has examined the significance of the mirrored self in the latter tale, and Robert Rogers, in A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature, includes both these tales in his discussion.) Since these stories use the Double motif for very different purposes than that of "Passages," they will not figure in this discussion.

<sup>8</sup> Rank's earlier, well-known essay on the Double is "Der Doppelgaenger," Imago 3 (1914).

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that Hawthorne gives no details of Eliakim's "misfortune" that evening. For a discussion of this disparity in the treatment of the two men's adventures, see Adkins's and Lathrop's comments on pp. 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> Although Hawthorne's family were, at least nominally, Unitarians, Hawthorne himself never considered himself a member of the Unitarian Church.

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HAWTHORNE'S USE OF THE DOUBLE IN  
"PASSAGES FROM A RELINQUISHED WORK"

by

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Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Passages from a Relinquished Work" uses the motif of the Double to explore the divided nature of the artist, who is both storyteller and "religious" thinker. The tale emerged from a planned but unrealized collection called The Story Teller, written before November, 1834, which was to present the travels of an itinerant storyteller. The first three segments were published as "Passages from a Relinquished Work" in the 1854 edition of Mosses from an Old Manse. Those few critics who have considered "Passages" have seen it only as one of Hawthorne's many portrayals of the role of the artist. They have not explored the particular treatment of that theme in this tale, its use of the Double motif to project the conflicting impulses within the artist. The narrator-storyteller is a carefree young man who is seen as frivolous by his Puritanical guardian Parson Thumpcushion. The narrator leaves home and, as he looks back at his village, the church spire emerges out of the fog as an emblem of religion. He soon meets his Double--Eliakim--a young, religious man who is similar to the narrator yet, in his shy, grave manner, is antithetical. Although their goals are different, the two men travel together in complementary dependence. Just before he performs one evening, the narrator witnesses Eliakim's failure with his little congregation. As he successfully entertains his audience with foolish buffoonery, the narrator is struck by the superficiality of his easy fame. As artist, he feels the tension between confronting real human issues but having no audience, or being frivolous and popular but feeling unsatisfied. The artist, he senses, must be more than entertaining; he must also be "religious"--not in any sectarian sense, but in exploring the deepest human truths, much as Kierkegaard and other existentialist theologians of the age were doing.

As the tale ends, the storyteller considers abandoning his calling; however, he and his Double continue on together--representing the conflicting yet complementary selves of the artist.